Inequality of U.S. Citizenship Testing

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

By

Virginia Orantes
in collaboration with Amy Cole

May 2016
The graduate project of Virginia Orantes is approved:

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Dr. Amy Levin, Chair                           Date

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Abstract

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By

Virginia Orantes

Master of Social Work

The purpose of this study was to determine if the test used in the Naturalization process consisting of questions focused on U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History is an equivalent measure for U.S. citizenship eligibility. It was the researchers’ hypothesis that those who are U.S. born citizens will not test as well as Naturalized citizens and therefore knowledge of the U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History is not a fair measure for U.S. citizenship eligibility. The study population consisted of both males and females between the ages of 25-44 years of age. Three separate groups of 16 were tested; Group A non-White recently naturalized U.S. citizens; Group B non-White U.S. born citizens; and Group C White U.S. born citizens. All groups were given a verbal test of the same 10 questions chosen randomly from the 100 questions of the Naturalization Test; a passing score is a six out of 10. Of the 48 participants tested, Group A’s test scores were highest and Group B’s test scores were the lowest; Group A, 100% passed, Group B 69% passed, and Group C 94% of Group C passed. The results of this study show that persons who are non-White U.S. citizens have the least knowledge of U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History. Furthermore, it highlights that White U.S. born citizens compared to those want to Naturalize do not have the same level of U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History knowledge.
Introduction

Across all countries in the world, the process by which a person becomes a citizen lies within what the country and government believe a person should know and be able to demonstrate in order to become a part of society legally. The United States bases this on the “Attachments to the Constitution” which outlines that a person must have a good moral character, positive references, and be able to demonstrate they are a helpful member to society through their employment and residence. However, there is nothing in the “Attachments” that one can point to requiring a test of U.S. Government, Civics and History (Hazard, 1929). Today the process of Naturalization is primarily based on a verbal test of 10 questions on U.S. Government, Civics and History.

The problem to be studied.

This study will examine whether or not the test required in the U.S. citizenship process is an equal measure to determine citizenship. It’s presence in the Naturalization process since its inception was used sporadically and subjectively. It originated in the 19th century and was administered orally by a judge, only if the judge felt it was necessary until 1906, when the Bureau of Naturalization took over the process (USCIS, 2013).

The U.S. was one of the first countries to implement a test to qualify for citizenship and other countries have followed suit. The politics that surround the institution of these tests is usually connected with a kind of national crisis of multiculturalism in the face of increased immigration in order to solidify a national identity against that influx (Harnett, 2013).
Purpose of study.

The objective of this study is to show that the test required in the U.S. Citizenship process is not an accurate and fair measure to determine citizenship and that since its origin, this test has been used as a tool of injustice that is oppressive to those who are immigrants attempting to obtain U.S. citizenship. The researchers were attempting to learn if there is a difference in test score between White U.S. born citizens, non-White U.S. born citizens, and non-White recently naturalized U.S. citizens and if non-White persons applying for citizenship know more about U.S. History than U.S. born citizens?

Literature review and conceptual framework.

A review of the history and soundness of the test researched by Antony John Kunnan, a published Ph.D. of applied linguistics, examines each metamorphisms of the test since its inception. The basis of the U.S. Naturalization test was said to support social cohesion, civic integration, political allegiance, and social harmony. Kunnan (2009) argues that the test is not able to accurately measure how English language ability and knowledge of U.S. civics proves these unifying ideals.

His review concludes that the test cannot serve as the purpose of civic nationalism or social integration because native born citizens are not asked to demonstrate their ability in English language or U.S. history and government before they are given a birth certificate, passport, government issued identification etc…nor are legal non-citizens required to take a test to immigrate and reside in the U.S. The test also does not meet the standards by the language assessment community as an accurate tool to measure English language, nor are those that give the test qualified to assess. Finally, the beneficial value of the test to society is unknown because it has not
been researched (Kunnan, 2009). In addition, Dr. Kunnan’s review also outlines the life of the Citizenship test throughout history being created and reinforced as a barrier to immigration with its alterations as a response to wartime hysteria, political crisis and fear of increased immigrants.

A national research study on this topic further supports what Dr. Kunnan concluded by highlighting the barriers linked to the Citizenship test; income, language, and education. The study analyzed 1,765 telephone interviews with Latinos ages 18 and older were asked the main reason they had not naturalized. 65% said they needed to learn English and 23% said they find the citizenship test too difficult. By about a two-to-one ratio, Mexican legal permanent residents were more likely than their non-Mexican counterparts to say that the main reason they have not become naturalized is language and other personal barriers (33% versus 17%). Mexicans are almost twice as likely as others to say that they either lack English proficiency (21%); find the test too difficult or are afraid of taking it (8%); or have tried to naturalize but did not succeed (4%). Financial hardship is more of an impediment for older Latino legal immigrants and those with lower household incomes (PRC, 2012).

Another study focused on the importance U.S. high schools place on knowledge of U.S. History and Government. The study based on a national, random sample survey of 866 public high school social studies teachers, an oversample survey of 245 Catholic and private high school social studies teachers, and three focus groups found that only 45% of teachers believe that social studies was considered important by their school districts and administration (Duffet & Farkas, 2010). If less than half of our high schools believe social studies is important, it is difficult to see how knowledge of U.S. History
and Government should be for those who Naturalize. Social cohesion is defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper (Stanley, 2003). If the purpose of the test is “social cohesion” this does not seem to support that ideal.

A model that best addresses the reasons as to why this Naturalization process is necessary, not only in the U.S. but around the world, seems to be best described under the Cultural Preservationist Model which focuses on immigrant assimilation and culture rather than national identity (Wilcox, S., 2004). Proponents of this model view the Naturalization policies as an important tool for preserving existing national cultures and claims that national culture is an instrumental good which all countries are entitled to protect. Others argue that citizens require access to a common national culture in order to achieve autonomy (Wilcox, S., 2004). Both views conclude that the primary aim of the Naturalization process and its policies should be to ensure that all immigrants assimilate to the national culture prior to becoming naturalized citizens.
Method

Participant characteristics.

This study was approved by the CSUN IRB. The study population consists of both males and females between 25-44 years of age. The study population was chosen in this way to represent the mean age of the population applying for U.S. citizenship.

According to U.S. Census Bureau, in 2014, there were almost an even number of males and females who were naturalized; 45.9% males, 54.1% females. Of these persons, the 25-44 age group was the largest age group of Naturalized citizens. These numbers have remained consistent since at least 2006 (USCB, 2014).

Table 1: Sex & Age of Native and Foreign-born U.S. Population (USCB, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Foreign born</th>
<th>Foreign born; Naturalized citizen</th>
<th>Foreign born; Not a U.S. citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>318,857,056</td>
<td>276,465,262</td>
<td>42,391,794</td>
<td>19,984,738</td>
<td>22,407,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX AND AGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.20%</td>
<td>49.30%</td>
<td>48.70%</td>
<td>45.90%</td>
<td>51.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.80%</td>
<td>50.70%</td>
<td>51.30%</td>
<td>54.10%</td>
<td>48.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 17 years</td>
<td>16.90%</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>7.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
<td>9.90%</td>
<td>10.30%</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44 years</td>
<td>26.40%</td>
<td>24.30%</td>
<td>39.80%</td>
<td>29.80%</td>
<td>48.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>12.80%</td>
<td>18.90%</td>
<td>21.90%</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
<td>12.40%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>18.50%</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
<td>12.40%</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three separate groups of 20 were tested; Group A will consist of non-White recently naturalized U.S. citizens; Group B consisted of non-White U.S. born citizens; and Group C consisted of White U.S. born citizens. Each group contained 10 males and 10 females. The total number of subjects equaled 60 (N = 60).

**Sampling procedures.**

Subjects were selected using convenience sampling. To maintain confidentiality, a third party facilitator performed and conducted the recruitment, engagement, and test. Subjects were provided with a copy of the Information Form to fully inform them of all details in conjunction with the study, and explain that no direct identifying information was gathered during the study that might identify them in any way if they agree to participate.

**Measures.**

The researchers identified subjects through a third party facilitator at the following public spaces surrounding two different locations:

1. The L.A. Convention Center which is a local ceremony site in which subjects who have recently become naturalized attend a Naturalization ceremony.

2. The Glendale Galleria is a local social venue in which U.S. born persons of all ages and races can be found and accessed for testing.

A verbal test was administered to the subjects. The facilitator asked the subjects ten questions and recorded the subject’s answers on a Test Form (See Appendix A). Each test administered consisted of the same 10 questions chosen from the 100 question Naturalization Test. These questions were chosen randomly, by selecting every tenth question from the 100 question Naturalization test the researchers obtained from the official website of the Department of Homeland Security (USCIS, 2015).
Once the test was completed, the facilitator scored the exam using the Answer Key (See Appendix A). If the subject wanted to know their score it was given to the subject at that time. A passing score is six out of 10. Providing this information to the subjects had no bearing on the outcomes of the study nor did this interfere with any data collection or create any biases. The completed Test Forms were placed in an envelope which were scanned later the same day into the researchers laptop computers that are password protected. The paper Test Forms were then destroyed.

**Research Design.**

This study utilized a Quantitative Study Design Method. The dependent variable was the performance on test and the independent variable was the test of 10 questions randomly picked from the Naturalization test. The variables were measured by comparing and contrasting each subject’s scores between the three groups.

**Intervention.**

A verbal test was administered to the subjects. The facilitator asked the subject ten questions and recorded the subject’s answers on a Test Form. Each test administered consisted of the same 10 questions. These questions were chosen randomly, by selecting every tenth question from the 100 question Naturalization test the researchers obtained from the official website of the Department of Homeland Security (USCIS, 2015).

No direct identifiable information is being collected during this study which could be traced back to, or linked to any subject. Only un-identifiable information was collected including: gender, age, citizenship status, month and year of naturalization (if applicable), and place of birth. Once all tests were administered by the third party facilitator, the scores were recorded by the researchers and then compared.
Results

This study attempted to test 60 subjects however four tests in each group were not counted due to participants falling outside of the study age-range. A total of 48 individuals between the ages of 25 and 44 were tested ($N = 48$). Three groups of 16 participants, eight male and eight female, were tested in each group. A Two-Way Factorial ANOVA was used to measure group scores and there was a significant difference in each group, $F(2,42) = 9.42, p < .001$.

Table 2: Two-Way Factorial ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7.542</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>6.846 - 8.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.917</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>6.221 - 7.613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 48 participants tested, it was found that Group A, had the highest test scores, Group C had the moderate scores, and Group B had the lowest scores.

Figure 1: Group Score Totals
Post Hoc Tukey tests revealed that for Group A scores were significantly higher (M = 8.62; SD = .95) in comparison to both group B (M 6.06; SD=2.46) and group C (M 7.0; SD=1.31).

Table 3: Post Hoc Tukey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset 1</th>
<th>Subset 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group C: White U.S born citizens</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A: Non-White recently naturalized U.S citizen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Participant Test Scores by Group

Of the 48 participants, the researchers evaluated test scores based on gender and found that overall, females and males scores totaled the same. Group A mirrored this result with both male and female scores totaling the same. However, within Group B and C, there was a difference in female and male overall scores. In Group B, females scored 16% below the males and in Group C, females also scored lower than their male counterparts by 3%.
A 2 x 3 Factorial ANOVA was conducted to examine the difference between gender and group scores. No significant relationship between gender and score was found, $F(1,42) = 1.64$, $p = .21$. Regardless of whether participants were male or female in general they scored relatively the same; Male M(7.5), Female M(6.9).

Table 4: 2 x 3 Factorial ANOVA: Gender and Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7.542</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>6.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.917</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>6.221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The significance in the results of our study supports our work as social workers in-line with the NASW code of ethics which requires us to advocate for social justice and equality among all members of the communities which we serve (NASW, 2008). Our proven hypothesis that knowledge of the U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History is not a fair measure for U.S. citizenship eligibility points to the need for advocacy of non-citizens.

The test was designed initially to create social cohesion. However, because the test has not been researched as a proven measure of social cohesion and its beneficial value to society, social workers can advocate at the government and community level for research to be done to solidify the test as a valid tool for citizenship or advocate for the Naturalization process to be redesigned.

It was also significant to find that the group of non-White U.S. born citizens scored much lower than White U.S. born citizens. The test presumes that those born in the U.S. have a comprehensive knowledge of U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History. Testing to create social cohesion means that those testing would be studying this information to meet the level of knowledge of those born and raised in the U.S. The result that non-White U.S. born citizens were the lowest testing group contradicts the idea of testing for social cohesion. Further research on this topic could be focused on the inequalities and barriers of White versus non-White individuals in the U.S. educational systems.

One of the limitations of this study was using a third party facilitator which may have led to misunderstanding of information and improperly completing the Group assignment portion of the test. The second limitation of the study was in
the number of tests that could be used for analysis. The researchers set out to test 60 participants but four tests in each group were not counted due to participants falling outside of the study age-range. However, each group consisted of an appropriate sample size so this did not affect the outcomes of the study.
Conclusion

U.S. citizenship first emerged under the Naturalization Act of 1790. Though the U.S. Declaration of Independence written in 1776 committed that “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” the Naturalization Act of 1790 discarded this equality of men and allowed only those who were free, White, and residents in the U.S. for at least two years to acquire citizenship (Kunnan, 2009).

The results of this study ultimately show that persons who are non-White U.S. citizens have the least knowledge of U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History. Furthermore it highlights that White U.S. born citizens compared to those who want to Naturalize do not have the same level of U.S. Government, Integrated Civics, and American History knowledge. A test of this knowledge is not an equal measure to determine citizenship if U.S. born citizens also do not have to maintain and prove that they have this knowledge to maintain citizenship and gain the benefits citizenship grants.
References


Appendix A

Test Form

Gender: M □ F □

Are you between the ages of 25-44? Y □ N □  Exact Age:________

U.S. Born Y □ N □  Birth City/State: ________________________________

Naturalized Citizen Y □ N □  Month/Year of US Naturalization: ___/____

Country of Origin: _________________

Based on the information above, the subject will be tested for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A: Non-White recently naturalized U.S. citizens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B: Non-White U.S. born citizens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C: White U.S. born citizens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test:**

What is the supreme law of the land?

What is freedom of religion?

Who is one of your state’s U.S. Senators now?

If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?

Who is the Chief Justice of the United States now?

Name one right only for United States citizens.

What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?

Who was the first President?

Who was President during the Great Depression and World War II?

What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?
Inequality of U.S. Citizenship Testing is a joint graduate project between Virginia Orantes and Amy Cole. This document will explain the division of responsibilities between the two parties. Any additional information can be included in a separate document attached to this Addendum page.

**Virginia Orantes** was responsible for all the following tasks/document sections:
- Created testing tools
- Identified and trained a third party facilitator who administered and gathered tests.
- Data entered test results into SPSS
- Created final capstone poster and handout materials

**Amy Cole** is responsible for all the following tasks/document sections:
- Wrote the Abstract
- Put together and wrote the Methodology
- Wrote the Discussion
- Wrote the limitations and Conclusion

Both parties shared responsibilities for the following tasks/document sections:
- Researched and wrote together the Literature Review
- Analyzed data, interpreted the results and created the tables and figures

---

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Committee Member

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Department Chair

Date

**Dr. Jodi Brown**

Committee Member

Date

**Committee Member**

Committee Member

Date

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